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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

RICHMOND, VA., Feb. 5, 1864.

To the House of Representatives:

In response to your resolution of the 25th ultimo, I herewith transmit, for your information, a communication from the Secretary of War, relative to the steps taken to carry out the provisions of the act of Congress "in relation to the arrest and disposition of slaves who have been recaptured from the enemy."

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

C. S. A., WAR DEPARTMENT,
Richmond, Va., Feb. 3, 1864.

To the President of the Confederate States:

SIR: Your letter of the 30th ultimo, referring to this Department a resolution of the House of Representatives, requesting to be informed "what steps have been taken to carry out the provisions of the act of Congress of the 13th October, 1862, ch. 62, in relation to the arrest and disposition of slaves who have been recaptured from the enemy, what number of depots for their safe-keeping have been established, and whether public notice has been given in the newspapers of their arrest, as provided in the said act," has been received. I have the honor to enclose general orders, No. 25, of the current series, which show the measures taken by the Department for the execution of the act of Congress cited. There has been no return to this Department by the commandants of the camps of instruction of their proceedings under these orders. Some instances of publications under the third paragraph of the orders have come to the notice of the Department, and the orders themselves have been duly promulgated through all the departments and districts of the army.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
JAMES A. SEDDON,
Secretary of War.

ADJUTANT AND INSPECTOR'S GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Richmond, March 6, 1863.

GENERAL ORDERS,
No. 25.

I. The following act of Congress and regulations to enforce the same, are published for the information of all persons concerned:

CHAP. LXII.—*An act to protect the rights of owners of slaves taken by or employed in the army.*

The Congress of the Confederate States of America do enact, That every person connected with the army or navy of the Confederate States, arresting or coming into possession of any slave, by capture from the enemy, or otherwise than by lawful authority, shall immediately report the same to the commanding officer of the post or brigade or station to which he may be attached. The said commanding officer shall, with as little delay as practicable, send the slaves so reported to the nearest depot described in the next section, with a register of the place and date of their arrest: *Provided, however,* That the said slaves, or any of them, may at once be delivered to their respective owners, if claim is made and established on satisfactory evidence.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of War shall establish depots for recaptured slaves, at convenient places, not more than five in number, in each State; and all slaves captured in such State shall be kept in such depots. Public notice shall be given of the places so selected.

SEC. 3. Lists of the slaves in each of such depots, showing the name and color of such slaves, the place and time of their arrest, and the names of their owners, as given by themselves, or otherwise ascertained, shall be regularly advertised in each State, in one or more newspapers of general circulation.

SEC 4. While such slaves are in depot, they may be employed, under proper guard, on public works; but no slave shall be removed from the depot to which he is first carried, for at least one month after the first advertisement of his being there, nor then, unless an exact register is made of the removal, and due advertisement made in the newspapers as aforesaid.

SEC. 5. Free access shall be permitted to all persons desiring to inspect the said slaves for the purpose of identifying them and establishing ownership; and upon due proof, they shall be immediately restored to the persons claiming them.

SEC. 6. It shall further be the duty of the Secretary of War to require the names of all slaves in the employment of an officer or soldier of the Confederate army or navy, with the names and residence of their owners, and of the person by whom hired out, and of the officer or soldier hiring, to be reported to his department, and a full register thereof to be kept for public inspection.

Sec. 7. The President shall prescribe regulations for carrying this act into effect, and provide for the subsistence of said slaves while in such depots. [Approved October 13, 1862.]

II. Depots for recaptured slaves are hereby established at the following places, viz:

At the Camp of Instruction at			Richmond,	in the State of	Virginia.
"	"	"	Petersburg,	"	"
"	"	"	Dublin Station,	"	"
"	"	"	Raleigh,	"	N. Carolina.
"	"	"	Columbia,	"	S. Carolina.
"	"	"	Macon,	"	Georgia.
"	"	"	Decatur,	"	"
"	"	"	Notasulga,	"	Alabama.
"	"	"	Talladega,	"	"
"	"	"	Tallahassee,	"	Florida.
"	"	"	Brookhaven,	"	Mississippi.
"	"	"	Enterprize,	"	"
"	"	"	Monroe,	"	Louisiana.
"	"	"	Camp Moore,	"	"
"	"	"	New Iberia,	"	"
"	"	"	Houston,	"	Texas.
"	"	"	Knoxville,	"	Tennessee.
"	"	"	McMinnsville,	"	"
"	"	"	Little Rock,	"	Arkansas.

III. The commandants of the several camps of instruction will provide necessary quarters for all negroes sent to the depots; will detail sufficient guards for their safe keeping; provide for their custody, employment and subsistence; require full and accurate registers to be kept, and advertisements, as prescribed by the act of Congress, to be regularly made, and afford all facilities to claimants to establish their ownership, and on due proof, surrender the slaves to their owners.

IV. Commanding generals will require all persons connected with the army to make immediate report of all slaves arrested or coming into their possession; and if claim is not promptly made and established by the owner, will send such slaves, with a register of the place and date of their arrest, with as little delay as practicable, to the nearest depot in the State wherein the capture is made. They will also require all officers and soldiers now employing slaves, forthwith to report the same, and those hereafter employing them, within ten days thereafter, with the names and residence of their owners, and of the person by whom they were hired out, and of the officer or soldier hiring, and return such reports as soon as received, to this office; and will, in all other respects, enforce from the officers and men under their command a strict and prompt observance of the requirements of the above recited act of Congress.

By order.

S. COOPER,
Adjutant and Inspector General.

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